

# HR Tool Box

State  
of  
Vermont

Department  
of  
Human  
Resources

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## **Editor:**

Karin Pelletier

## **From the Commissioner**

This edition of the HR Tool Box will come out after my last day of work. I am leaving on another extended absence for military duty with the Vermont National Guard and I expect to be gone through the end of 2010. I will take this opportunity to say good bye and thank you to all of our HR Partners.

This is certainly a tough time in state government, and an especially challenging time for all of us who work on human resources issues. There are few tasks more difficult or less desirable than working on the Reduction-in-Force process. No one likes to see employees lose jobs, and the RIF process can give rise to some thorny HR issues. The challenges will not end with the completion of the process to reduce positions – the demands on DHR's staff and on all of the HR partners will continue for at least the next two years, as we continue to assist the many people who are already on the RIF rolls, and the many more who may be added to those rolls.

As we work through these extremely difficult times, it is especially important that employees are treated with compassion and respect, which means carefully considering their dignity, their feelings, and *how* bad news should be delivered. We must also ensure that employees are guided through the process in accordance with the rules, as established by the collective bargaining agreements and our Personnel Policies. Abiding by the rules pertains not only to the RIF separation process, but to the RIF rehire process as well. As you see RIF referrals to your departments, you will play an important role in ensuring that the State of Vermont lives up to its contractual and moral obligation to give each mandatory hire a fair chance to succeed in a new position. Please do everything you can to see that they receive the training, feedback, and support to successfully complete their working test periods.

Before I close, I would like to focus on one more issue. As the Vermont National Guard anticipates what may be its largest call to active duty yet (I'm one of a relatively small number now, but later this year the number should grow substantially) I expect that many of you will have employees who receive orders. That will mean there will be additional questions about military leave, USERRA (the federal statute that provides for reemployment of guard and reserve members who receive orders), the right to continue benefits, and military pay differential. Please do your best to see that these employees receive the support they are due. Attention to these obligations will avoid liability for the State and will assist the employee-soldiers at a time when it counts.

There is so much uncertainty in our world now – what will come of discussions with V.S.E.A.? How many positions must we eliminate? I cannot even tell you who will take over as HR Commissioner. For the immediate future, Deputy Secretary of Administration Linda McIntire will resume her former duties as Interim HR Commissioner, while still serving as Deputy Secretary, until a replacement is identified. One thing I know for sure is that we have a hard working and talented group of HR professionals across state government and I thank you for your dedication to your duties. I look forward to working with you again when I return.

David K. Herlihy  
Commissioner  
Vermont Department of Human Resources

## Benefits Corner

### Medical Leave of Absence from College for Dependent Children ages 19 – 23

When employees are enrolled in the State Employee's Health Plan, their enrolled children are covered up to the age of 19, unless they are a full-time student in which case they are covered up to age 23. As many enrolled employees have experienced, they are required to complete a Student Verification Affidavit from CIGNA asking to confirm their status as a full-time student just before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and annually thereafter.

Recently we were asked -- **what happens when the student needs to leave school because of a medical or behavioral health emergency?**

Under state law, if a covered dependent child aged 19 – 23 requests and is granted a Medical Leave of Absence by their college or trade school, the dependent child is eligible to remain on their parent's policy as though they were enrolled as a full-time student. The key to retaining coverage for the dependent child is that they are on an **approved Medical Leave of Absence** – if they just leave school or don't return between semesters, they will no longer be eligible for dependent coverage.

Dependent children over age 19 who do lose their coverage are in most cases eligible for COBRA benefits. In addition, they may income qualify for coverage through one of the Green Mountain Care programs such as Catamount Health or Vermont Health Access Plan. More information on Green Mountain Care can be found at [www.greenmountaincare.org](http://www.greenmountaincare.org).

Please contact the Employee Benefits Unit at 828-3455 or 828-0648 with questions.

## My Health Assessment

You want to make some lifestyle changes. Maybe you've been feeling a little sluggish and are looking to increase your energy level. Or perhaps you want to lose some weight and just don't know where to begin.

Why not begin by completing the online health assessment for a profile of your health and health status? The health assessment can give you an idea of the current state of your health. Based on your responses, you'll also learn if you are at any risk for certain conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure.



**To start**, log in to [www.myCIGNA.com](http://www.myCIGNA.com) and select the "MY Health" tab near the top of the page. Select *Take my health assessment* to the right of the screen and follow the registration instructions until you reach *my health & wellness center*. Select *Take my health assessment now* and follow the steps through the questionnaire. Try to have your blood pressure, total cholesterol and HDL cholesterol values with you when completing the health assessment.

**My wellness score** - after completing the health assessment, you'll receive a wellness score based on how you average compared to people in your gender and age group. Don't worry if your numbers are not what you hoped for. You can update the assessment whenever you make a change to your health. You'll be surprised how just a few simple changes can improve your wellness score significantly.

## Labor Relations

### EEO Officer – Roles and Responsibilities

This is a reminder that in accordance with Personnel Policy 3.0 – Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action, each agency/department is to appoint an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer. It is common for that responsibility to be delegated to a member of the agency/department's HR staff. It is also likely that even if you aren't designated as the agency/department EEO Officer, as an HR administrator in State government, you have EEO responsibilities as part of your regular job functions. This is an outline of the roles and responsibilities specific to the agency/department EEO Officer:

- Check to ensure that all EEO and AAP posters are properly displayed, that all facilities maintained for the use and benefit of employees are in fact comparable for both sexes, and that minority and female employees are encouraged to participate in all Agency-sponsored educational, training, recreational and social activities.
- Assist management and HR to collect and analyze employment data, identify problem areas, set Affirmative Action (AA) goals and timetables and develop programs to achieve these goals. Such programs include specific remedies to eliminate any discriminatory practices discovered in the employment system.
- Investigate complaints of discrimination and harassment.

- Maintain records for HR of all complaints and investigations of discrimination and harassment.
- Audit training programs and hiring and promotion patterns to remove impediments to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce.
- Provide career advancement resources and referrals for all employees.
- Assist management and HR to develop policy statements, AA initiatives, and internal and external communication mechanisms.
- Assist management and HR with the implementation and monitoring of the AA Plan.
- Design and implement audit and reporting systems that will measure the effectiveness of EEO, AA, and Diversity initiatives and determine the degree to which goals and objectives have been attained.
- Serve as liaison between the Agency and minority organizations, women's organizations, and community action groups concerned with employment opportunities for minorities and women.
- Keep management informed of the latest developments in EEO, AA, and promoting and managing diversity.

If you have questions about EEO Officer responsibilities, please contact Karin Pelletier, the State Equity and Diversity Officer, in the DHR Labor Relations Division at 828-2972 or at: [karin.pelletier@state.vt.us](mailto:karin.pelletier@state.vt.us).

### Applications due for the Vermont Public Manager Program

Please remind managers, leaders and other key staff that they can apply for admission to the Vermont Public Manager Program. The due date of March 23 will be extended for anyone just getting this message, but any last minute applications must be in by noon on March 27.

See the VPM webpage for more information:

([http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training\\_pubman.php](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training_pubman.php))

or contact Rose Gowdey at 241-1117, [rose.gowdey@state.vt.us](mailto:rose.gowdey@state.vt.us).

## SAVE THE DATE!

**HR PARTNERS  
Quarterly Meeting  
April 29, 2009  
9:00 -12:00  
Hazen's Notch  
The Summit  
Waterbury**

## The Department of Human Resources

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We're on the Web!  
See us at:

[www.vermontpersonnel.org](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org)

## Workforce Planning Toolkit

Over the last six months the Workforce Development Team has been designing a comprehensive statewide workforce planning toolkit for your use on the Summit website, to roll out very soon. It will include (but not be limited to): strategic planning, succession planning, professional development, knowledge transfer, performance management, statewide core competencies and much more!

Even before we have finished the toolkit, we are using our web page ([http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training\\_catalog.php](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training_catalog.php)) to share with you some of the products as we have created them. We hope you will check back often and test these templates and tools, and give us your feedback on content, ease of use, and relevance to your work.

We hope you will find these resources helpful in your management, planning and development activities. Please contact us if you have any questions or for your training and development needs.

[Professional Workforce Planning Template](#) (Word Document)

[Individual Professional Development and Training Plan Template](#) (Word Document)

### ***The Summit: Center for State Employee Development (DHR) and Workplace Safety & Training (BGS) are pleased to announce the availability of on-line courses for state employees!***

This collaborative offering was created to:

- Provide additional training and professional development for state employees
- Reduce course costs and associated expenses such as mileage/travel and overtime
- Better serve state employees in outlying/remote areas of the state
- Allow employees to access the trainings according to their schedules and time constraints
- Better serve those who work alternate shifts (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts)

We have had good initial response to the on-line learning opportunities and we look forward to continuing to provide this service in a manner that is agreeable to all.

For more information about on-line learning for state employees please visit :  
[http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training\\_online.php](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training_online.php)

